

Kath Inglis

of uncertain value



The Guildhouse Collections Project

Santos Museum of Economic Botany
Adelaide Botanic Garden

15 July – 29 September 2019



Kath Inglis

of uncertain value

The Guildhouse Collections Project

Santos Museum of Economic Botany

Adelaide Botanic Garden

15 July–29 September 2019

The Adelaide Botanic Garden is a place of inspiration and wonder. One of Adelaide's oldest cultural establishments, the Garden is also the most visited institution in the state. While most people visit the Adelaide Botanic Garden to enjoy the peace, beauty and tranquility there is an underlying seriousness in the work that's done here; be it horticulture, botany, conservation or education.

The Garden is a cultural and scientific institution and its history, like all botanic gardens since the Renaissance, has been an interaction between nature, science and art. Natural scientists have worked with botanical artists for centuries and continued to do so, even after the advent of photography, because artists have the ability to capture something that the camera lens alone cannot. When artists, such as Kath Inglis, are given license to respond to nature, free from constraints, we see the world through another lens; one which helps us imagine and wonder.

Here lies the magic of Kath Inglis' body of work created in response to the rich marine algae collection held by the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium. The Guildhouse Collections Project provides space, time and access to our collections, resulting in a beautiful exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Inglis was drawn to the collection through her long-standing obsession with plastic—its overuse, its disposal in our treasured waterways, its impact on the environment and also—its often unappreciated beauty. Inglis is renowned for her work with PVC; hand-dying, cutting, shaping, forming, ultimately transforming what is lifeless and of little value into sparkling gems. Through the Collections Project residency Inglis has drawn inspiration from the microscopic views of algae forms and discovered new techniques, evident in this new body of work.

image Kath Inglis

Epiphyte Brooch (detail), 2019

PVC, cellophane printing on PVC, plastic microbeads,
lollypop sticks, paint, silk thread and stainless steel

© the artist

photograph Grant Hancock

The Guildhouse Collections Project with the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium provides a rare and wonderful opportunity for an artist to delve deep into the treasures of an important state collection; to research, study and collaborate with specialist curators and produce new work for exhibition in the historic Santos Museum of Economic Botany. Home to an extensive permanent collection, much of which dates back to the original museum display 130 years ago, the Museum is the last of its kind in the world. Artists working with the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium not only have access to this valuable collection, but also the Garden's living collection, library, and the Herbarium's preserved collections.

Guildhouse is a South Australian organisation dedicated to working with visual artists, craftspeople and designers, government and industry, to champion the visibility and appreciation of artists in our community. For over 53 years we have defined ourselves through a commitment to partnerships, adaptation and responsiveness to the changing conditions facing artists and makers. Together with our partners, we create opportunities for meaningful, sustainable careers in the creative sector.

The Guildhouse Collections Project is the result of true partnership and demonstrates the value of creating new and ambitious environments for artists, scientists, collections and audiences to coalesce. We extend our thanks to the Government of South Australia and the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund for their support of this important initiative.

Emma Fey

Chief Executive Officer, Guildhouse

Tony Kanellos

Curator, Santos Museum of Economic Botany

image Kath Inglis
Epiphyte Neckpiece (detail), 2019
PVC, cellophane printing on PVC, cling wrap, paint, PVC
heat formed with fishing line binding and stainless steel
© the artist
photograph Grant Hancock



of uncertain value

We live on the body of the sleeping giant. We live on the wetlands of the earth, I am a Mirning woman writing and living on Kurna country, the lands near Karrawirra Parri and Tarndanyangga Adelaide. Our knowledges are always located.

I have always loved the names and lists and descriptions for things, the untold stories of naming. Endless lists and collections of names; common and Latin and Nunga (Indigenous) names. Names for trees and stones, names for all the different types of fish and seaweed and shells. Names for shades of colours and spirits. Descriptions of how things looked when underwater and again when dried-up, salt-crustured and sandy.

Kath Inglis' incredible new work engages with the endless observations of the value of materials in relation to a living planet. Her work expresses agency of intention, a beautiful and methodical process and focus. Her work is both loving and generous and imagines new entanglements of human/non-human, living and non-living.

Maria Lugones, Argentinian feminist, activist, philosopher describes an agency of transformation as the following:

I dismiss the modern western notion of agency—the ground of individual responsibility—in favour of a more contained, more inward, sense of activity of the self in metamorphosis. Like in a cocoon, the changes are not directed outward, at least not toward those domains permeated by the logics of dominations.ⁱ

Professor Karen Barad, feminist theorist, quantum physicist describes:

Agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. So agency is not about choice in any liberal humanist sense; rather, it is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices.ⁱⁱ

First of all, agency is about response-ability, about the possibilities of mutual response, which is not to deny, but to attend to power imbalances.ⁱⁱⁱ

Ideas about collective-creative-hope and agency and ethical response-ability of enactment are fundamental principles in the act of making for an artist. Artists engage in reconfiguring and sharing; our collective uncertainty, and the humanness of our flawed observations of the world.

Karan Barad speaks of the reconfiguring of entanglements and the possibility to attend to power imbalances and these ideas resonate with Inglis' work which could be read as seeking material justice and somehow a specific reconfiguring of our relationships with our presents and our pasts. Our incredible botanical histories of oceans and earth and our plastic presents, where more and more micro plastics are inhabiting the food chain, oceans and waterways.^{iv} In this way Kath's work is a political meditation on form and value, plastics must be seen as important, and valuable and beautiful. While many of these ideas are more recently referred to as 'post-humanities' or 'new-materialities' it can be understood that the continual ethical rebalancing of power amongst the earth, sky, waters and all living and non-living beings and long ethical relationships of voice have always been Indigenous perspectives. This rebalancing in the face of the so-called progress of modernity, of colonisation; involves slowing down time.

What then is important to consider about cultural production in relation to anthropology, museum practice and cultural criticism more broadly? When we think about cultural continuance we want to consider ongoing health and cultural activity as part of a contribution to the reproduction of wellbeing for all. We want to consider a continuum of narrative. How have museums and collections helped us to arrive in this place? What do we understand about the impacts of the classification of knowledge?

In colonising economic and legal systems there are few understandings of a whole complete and complex living earth as inherently and fundamentally valuable; our planet that has such great value it must precede all other values. This philosophical inability to collectively perceive what Indigenous peoples have always known, that everything is connected, perhaps demonstrates our great globalised environmental flaw. Our collective cultural crisis can be seen as who will stand for the whole planet? Not the miniature, fragmented, disciplined, specimen, not the individual, institution, local, community, state, nation... but the complex whole?

When you meet water or river scientists located in government departments who are employed and responsible for researching one aspect of one major river in one territory, not necessarily entire river networks and groundwater systems spanning the continent, spanning the planet; when you understand how fractured and fragmented our legal, political, policy and governance systems are, you can begin to perceive our collective problem of the inability to see the inherent value of the whole.

Modernity is always about separating, individualising, compartmentalising and disciplining, as Barad speaks about in her analysis of the connections between quantum physics and cultural studies. Similarly, Moten and Harney also query the urgency and production of modernity:

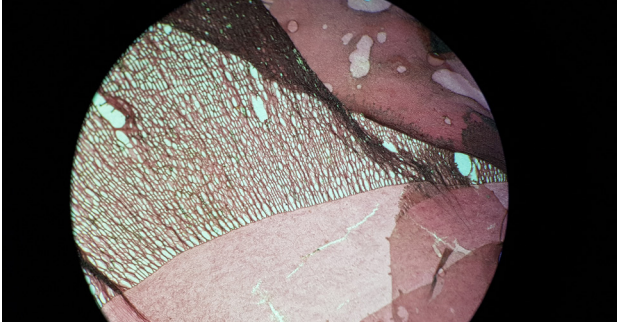
Where did logistics get this ambition to connect bodies, objects, affects, information, without subjects, without the formality of subjects, as if it could reign sovereign over the informal, the concrete and generative indeterminacy of material life? ...Modernity is sutured by this hold. This movement of things, unformed objects, deformed subjects, nothing yet and already. This movement of nothing is not just the origin of modern logistics, but the annunciation of modernity itself, and not just the annunciation of modernity itself but the insurgent prophesy that all of modernity will have at its heart, in its own hold, this movement of things, this interdicted, outlawed social life of nothing.^v

The question of how these institutional spaces containing collections of scientific, personal and public documents directly shape and affect the emotional and physical landscapes of our lives continues to be of vital importance. Finding our way out of these physical-ideological enclosures and seeking ways that may continue the partial shedding of the fragmentation that can engulf our lives and search for new ways to express the complex living whole should be part of our collective search for well-being.

Kath's work engages with the value of time and form and in gentle material ways requires us to question the values we hold. This collection of bound and dyed, stretched and carved, bright and clear, sparkling plastic responds to the call of the oceanic specimens contained within The State Herbarium archive and at the same time asks vital questions about the futures of our oceans.

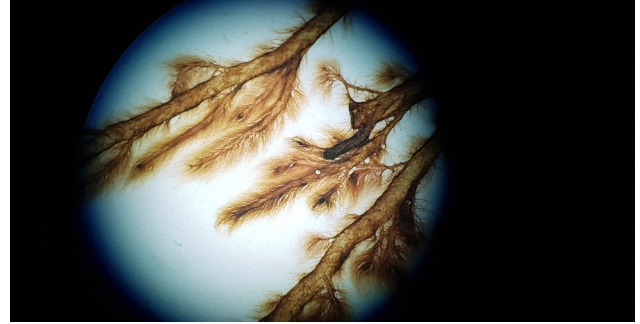
Ali Gumillya Baker

i Lugones, M. (2005). From within Germinative Stasis: Creating Active Subjectivity, Resistant Agency. *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds*. A. Keating. New York, Palgrave Macmillan: 86.
ii Barad, K., et al. (2012). Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers"; Interview with Karen Barad. *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*. p. 7.
iii Ibid p 9.
iv <https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/591640/recycling-plastics/>.
v Harney, S. and F. Moten (2013). *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. Brooklyn NY, Minor Compositions: 92.



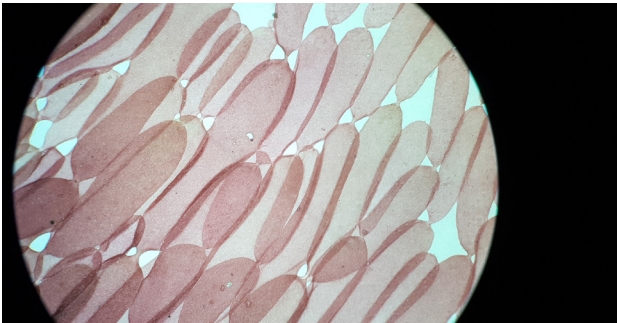
Martensia australis

I love viewing this specimen through the microscope. The transition from a thin film to an ordered macrame-like mesh structure at its edges is mind-blowing.



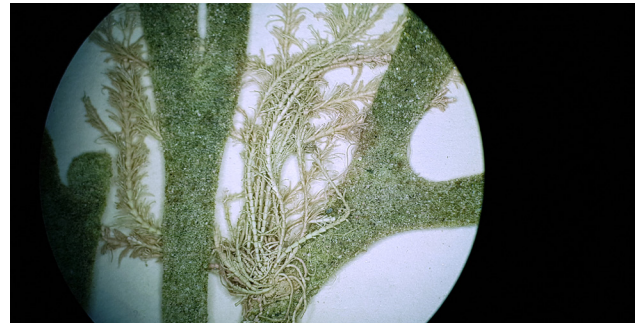
Dasya baldockii

I held my breath viewing this specimen, not wanting to disturb the incredibly delicate fine flowing hairs. But nothing here can move. It is captured still on a page: collected for the purpose to view and study.



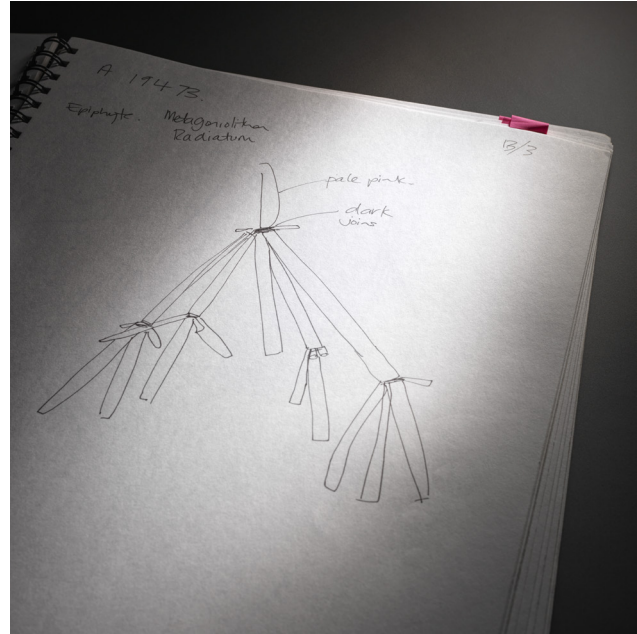
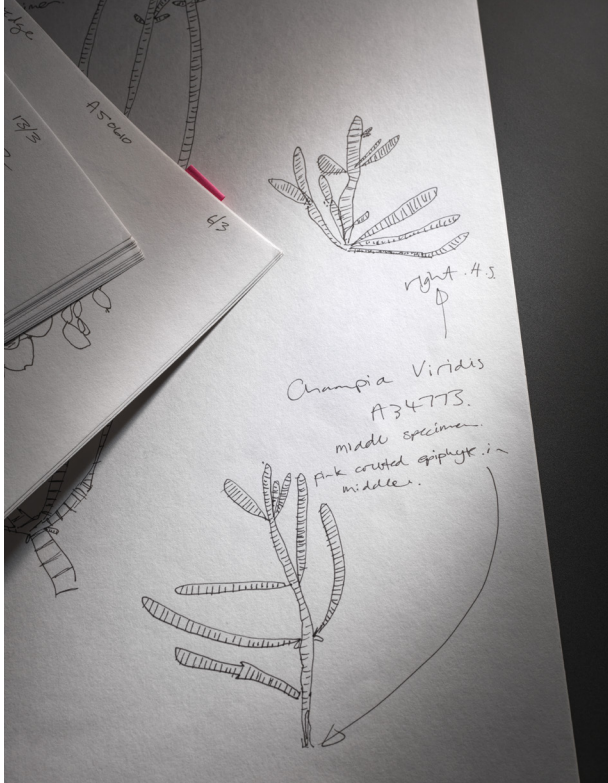
Coelarthrum opuntia

Many of the specimens remind me of synthetic materials: cling wrap, balloons, lollipop sticks, mesh ... This specimen inspired me to experiment with cellophane. Although I didn't achieve what I set out to do, I did accidentally come upon a new way to transfer colour to PVC.



Codium galeatum with unnamed epiphyte

*The microscope reveals another world of relationships. The bubble-like surface of the *Codium galeatum* offers an ideal surface for an epiphyte to grow. I was drawn to these unnamed specimens: was their story valued and collected?*



I sit at a desk inside Vault 1 at the State Herbarium. Hard light from the microscope illuminates a marine algae specimen that is attached to a sheet of paper in front of me. Looking through the microscope, I am introduced to another world of scale and start to draw what I observe...

My visual diary has changed dramatically for this project. Usually it is full of words, not pictures. Drawing helped me learn about the structures of marine algae, how they grow, their form and texture.

Kath Inglis

Raised in Australia's multicultural tropical city of Darwin, Kath Inglis moved south to Adelaide to study contemporary jewellery. After graduating from the South Australian School of Art in 2000, Kath continued to develop her practice by working from a number of studios, including the renowned Gray Street Workshop, JamFactory's Metal Design Studio and soda and rhyme. Kath is inspired by her surroundings; with political and social issues to weather extremes and subtle events finding their way into her work. Her jewellery pieces become an autobiography of her life. Her passion for Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) started in 2001 and she takes great joy in transforming a mundane material into something precious. A career highlight so far is having her work collected by the Art Gallery of South Australia and at the same time being included in the Guildhouse 50th anniversary exhibition in 2016. Kath Inglis' work is in high demand and her jewellery can be found in stockists and gallery shops in Australia, New Zealand, USA and China. Kath lives in the beautiful Adelaide Hills with a studio located at The Hahndorf Academy.

Algae

red, green, brown, yellow-brown, golden, blue-green; from 1µm in diameter to 20 m long; some are shaped like trees, shrubs, turfs, balloons, dots, nets, fans, cushions, beads, gelatinous blobs, threads, delicate membranous leaves or scaly coatings on rocks or other algae; some are limy or slimy, some mixed with sponges, some parasites of other algae, many growing on other plants or on rock, on wet soil, fouling bottoms of boats, or in pooled water in gutters, or coloring salt lakes pink

Not surprisingly, artists visiting the algal collections at the State Herbarium are amazed by their variety, complexity and beauty.

The State Herbarium holds 120,000 specimens, mainly from the southern Australian coastline which has high numbers of species found nowhere else. The basis of the collection was made by Emeritus Professor Womersley. He was responsible for the 6 volume *Marine Benthic Flora of Southern Australia*, purported to be the only existing complete Flora of a region.

Visitors are astounded when shown the anatomy of algae under a microscope. Identification of algae requires special techniques—cutting and staining slices or sections and making tissue squashes for microscopic investigation and teasing out reproductive structures. In addition to the pressed specimens of whole plants, 25,000 microscope slides have been archived. DNA analysis requires sequestering fragments of algae from pressed specimens, keeping them dry in silica beads in order to process them and place the information on GenBankⁱ, an international data base.

Two groups of algae—the blue-greens (cyanophytes) and the diatoms are enormous with half a million species. The other groups consist about 33,000 named species, not including 75,000 hidden (cryptic) ones in existing species that look similar or have been overlooked.ⁱⁱ

Some algae have antibiotic propertiesⁱⁱⁱ some are poisonous^{iv} and others are being cultured in order to feed shellfish such as abalone that provide high economic returns. Many processed foods contain algal additives such as carrageenan, carotene and alginates. A niche market for tasty algae in restaurants is fortunately restricted to those algae that can be cultured—otherwise the coastline would have been selectively stripped bare of these species.

Algae are the basis of coastal food webs, and changes due to human impact are being monitored by community volunteers.^v A few algae are nuisances as fouling organisms, generally introduced from the northern hemisphere on ships.^{vi} The complete and up to date collections at the Herbarium are used to ensure accurate identifications for monitoring and biosecurity. Recent e-Flora Website publications^{vii} are designed to help with this and to make the vast resources of the Herbarium accessible to the public.

Algae have great aesthetic appeal too, and in the short time that Kath Inglis has been working on the Herbarium collections we found ourselves looking at our subject through different eyes and making slightly different observations and decisions as a result of her influence. This is an example of the mutual benefits of sharing across art and science.

Bob Baldock

Honorary Research Associate, State Herbarium of South Australia.

i <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/> accessed June 2019.

ii Guiry, M. D. (2012). How many species of algae are there? *J. Phycol.* 48, 1057–1063.

iii Hayes, M. (Ed.) *Marine Bioactive Compounds. Sources, Characterization and Applications.* New York. Springer 2012.

iv <https://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Sustainability-and-Environment/Fisheries-Science/Aquatic-Animal-Health/Pages/Poisonous-Algae.aspx>, accessed June 2019.

v <http://www.reefwatch.asn.au/reports.html> accessed June 2019.

vi <https://www.marinepests.gov.au/pests/map> accessed June 2019.

vii http://www.flora.sa.gov.au/algae_revealed/index.shtml accessed June 2019.

image Kath Inglis

Epiphyte Neckpiece (detail), 2019

Cellophane printing on PVC, PVC heat formed

with fishing line binding, lollypop sticks,

paint, silk thread and stainless steel

© the artist

photograph Grant Hancock





Kath Inglis

of uncertain value

Published in 2019 by the Board of the
Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium

Adelaide Botanic Garden
North Terrace, Adelaide
South Australia 5000

ISBN 978-1-921876-09-7

The Collections Project is presented as a partnership between Guildhouse
and the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium of South Australia

Guildhouse is assisted by the Government of
South Australia through Arts South Australia and
the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of
the Australian, State and Territory Governments

Catalogue

Tony Kanellos and Emma Fey

Text

Emma Fey, Tony Kanellos, Ali Gumillya Baker,
Bob Baldock and Kath Inglis

Photography

Grant Hancock

Design

Guildhouse

Guildhouse and the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium acknowledge that
they operate on the lands of the Kurna Nation and recognise the continued
relationship to their lands by traditional owners past, present and emerging.

cover image Kath Inglis
Epiphyte Brooch, 2019
PVC, plastic microbeads, cling wrap, paint
and stainless steel
© the artist
photograph Grant Hancock



COPYRIGHTAGENCY
CULTURAL FUND

guildhouse